

## Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

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TO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 189504

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, MOPS, LE, SY

SUBJECT: BEIRUT FIGHTING: DIALOGUE WITH SYRIANS

REFS: (A) STATE 187079; (B) DAMASCUS 4271; (C) STATE  
188248; (D) STATE 188245

1. WE ARE VERY MUCH CONCERNED WITH THE DANGEROUS SITUATION

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CAUSED BY THE FIGHTING IN AND AROUND BEIRUT AND HAVE BEEN  
CONSIDERING WHAT STEPS MIGHT BE TAKEN IN ORDER TO PUT  
PRESSURE ON THE PARTIES CONCERNED TO DO WHAT THEY CAN TO  
CORRECT IT AND TO RESTORE A CEASEFIRE. WE HAVE SOUGHT  
TO PERSUADE SYRIA TO FIND POSITIVE STEPS OUT OF THE PRESENT  
SITUATION AND TO ASSURE THEM THAT WE WOULD SUPPORT SUCH  
EFFORTS. YOU SHOULD THEREFORE MAKE THE FOLLOWING POINTS

TO SYRIAN AMBASSADOR SHOUFI, PLACING THEM WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF MUTUALLY USEFUL US-SYRIAN DIALOGUE ON MATTERS LEBANESE STRETCHING BACK TO 1976:

-- NOTE THAT WE HAVE BEEN FULLY AWARE OF THE GREAT RESTRAINT EXERCISED BY THE SYRIANS SINCE THE JULY 6 CEASEFIRE IN THE FACE OF MANY PROVOCATIONS AND A HIGH CASUALTY RATE.

-- THE NEW CONFRONTATION IN HADATH, A BEIRUT SUBURB, WHICH BROKE OUT THIS LAST WEEKEND HAS BECOME SERIOUS. HEAVY SYRIAN BOMBARDMENTS WERE TAKING PLACE TUESDAY NIGHT, ALTHOUGH THE SITUATION APPEARS TO BE RELATIVELY QUIET TODAY. THESE BOMBARDMENTS APPEAR DISPROPORTIONATE AND CAUSE A HEAVY TOLL IN CIVILIAN CASUALTIES. THEY DO NOT IN OUR JUDGMENT APPEAR TO BE AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO DEAL WITH THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE ACTUALLY ATTACKED AND PROVOKED THE SYRIAN FORCES.

-- FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS ALONE, WE BELIEVE THE SYRIANS SHOULD STOP SUCH BOMBARDMENTS AND TRY TO FIND SOME OTHER WAY TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM. THE EFFECT OF THESE BOMBARDMENTS IS TO UNITE LEBANESE CITIZENS WHO OTHERWISE WOULD HAVE NO QUARREL WITH SYRIA'S PEACE-KEEPING ROLE INTO OPPOSITION TO THE SYRIANS. A CONTINUATION OF THIS KIND OF CONFRONTATION COULD CAUSE SARKIS TO TRY TO

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RESIGN AGAIN, AND THIS MIGHT MEAN AN END TO LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY IN LEBANON.

-- IN ASKING THE SYRIANS TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT, WE ARE NOT ACTING IN A ONE-SIDED WAY OR IMPLYING ANY BLAME. WE HAVE MADE THE STRONGEST POSSIBLE EFFORTS IN URGING RESTRAINT ON THE MARONITE MILITIA LEADERS. WE HAVE URGED THE ISRAELIS NOT ONLY TO ACT WITH RESTRAINT BUT TO GET THE MESSAGE TO THEIR MARONITE CONTACTS IN LEBANON THAT THEY DO NOT HAVE A BLANK CHECK AND THAT THEY MUST NOT PROVOKE THE SYRIAN FORCES. WE HAVE BEEN IN REGULAR TOUCH WITH THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT LEADERS ALSO, AND WE HAVE TRIED TO KEEP UP THE DIALOGUE WITH SYRIA, WE HAVE DISCUSSED WITH THE SYRIANS AND OTHERS VARIOUS PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS WHICH WOULD REDUCE THE POSSIBILITIES OF FUTURE CONFRONTATIONS. WE WOULD GIVE SUPPORT TO ANY DISENGAGEMENT FORMULA WHICH COULD SEE SECURITY FUNCTIONS IN KEY FLASH-POINTS TAKEN OVER BY LEBANESE POLICE AND MILITARY UNITS. SOME STEPS IN THIS DIRECTION HAVE ALREADY BEEN TAKEN, AND A CEASE-FIRE AND FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS ARE NEEDED TO ALLOW THE PROCESS TO CONTINUE.

-- WE HOPE THE SYRIANS WILL SUGGEST TO US WAYS IN WHICH  
WE MIGHT BE HELPFUL. WE WOULD LIKE TO CONSULT ON WAYS  
IN WHICH THE US COULD BE SUPPORTIVE OF NEW ARRANGEMENTS  
FOR SECURITY IN THE BEIRUT AREA WHICH SYRIA WOULD CON-  
SIDER ACCEPTABLE BUT WOULD ALSO REDUCE THE POSSIBILITY OF  
FUTURE TENSIONS AND CONFRONTATIONS. CHRISTOPHER

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